

The Magic Spell of a Woman Spy

The Trial, Sentence and Execution of Mata-Hari the Dancer.

Proof of the Prisoner's Guilt.

FIRST INSTALMENT.

Major Massard, Who Escorted Her to the Shooting Post, Tells the Incidents of the Beauty's Defiance of Her Judges.

Trapped With German Funds, She Contended to the Last That the Remittance Was a Lover's Gift from Von Kroon.

By Ferdinand Tuohy.

(Late British Intelligence Corps.) Certain revelations are perhaps better left unrevealed. The revelation made by Major Massard, late French General Staff, and bearing upon the culpability of Mata-Hari, the Dutch dancer shot by the French as a spy in 1917, may be said to belong to the above category.

They leave one with an uneasy feeling that a terrible error of justice may just possibly have been committed. They certainly utterly fail short of their set purpose, namely, to convey to us that, four years after, a French author has no right to stage a play in Paris based on the tragedy of Mata-Hari and painting her as a near-heroine pleading for mercy from stern officers of a court martial.

The play in question, "La Danseuse Rouge," and to which all Paris is flocking, if only to see the great acting of Mlle. Cora Laparcerie, is probably a fairly true picture of Mata-Hari's fight for life. We see again the seductive prisoner admitting great frailty but denying she ever spied, we see her aged lawyer hopelessly in love with his client and in floods of tears at the verdict. * * * and we see a woman's astounding courage at the point of death. And we proceed to sympathize with her, forgetting she may have sent thousands of pupils to their deaths (as it is claimed Mata-Hari did), but just bearing in mind that she is a woman, in distress—had wholly seductive. The notion of transforming her into cold, dead flesh is repellent.

The sympathy thus shown (and of all people, by certain of the critics) to the woman who led Mata-Hari to the shooting post, to rise up and brand the latter as a vile creature undeserving of any human compassion. The Germans were already doing enough cinema and dramatic propaganda round Mata-Hari with a view to besmirching the fair name of France. It only required a French actress to put Mata on the same pedestal as Nurse Cavell! An end to all this humbug and misplaced sentiment! So Major Massard girded on his pen. A competent officer who has written several standard books on the hidden side of the war, there can be no doubt but that the Major knows what he is writing of.

One wishes Major Massard had never set out to prove Mata-Hari guilty of a terrible crime against the Allies—unless he told us all. Allow me to state the fact that he may not have been able to relate all of the information which fell into French hands and which went to prove the culpability of Mata-Hari in the eyes of her judges. Major Massard himself lays stress on "the decisive proof"—namely, upon that part of the evidence which, we must presume, caused the woman's judges to sentence the prisoner to death. And what is this proof?

The "decisive proof" of Mata-Hari's guilt, we are assured, reposed in the fact that she went to the Dutch Legation in Paris and as "C. A. 22" drew a sum of 15,000 francs which had been forwarded there by the Chief of the German Intelligence in Amsterdam. Mata-Hari had just come from Madrid, where she had had relations with the local German Intelligence officer, von Kroon, and it had been at the latter's request, cabled to Amsterdam, that the money had been forthcoming to Mata-Hari in Paris. Mata-Hari had previously refused to accept jewelry from von Kroon in payment for her services, which latter, she insisted, were concerned with Venus and not at all with Mars. But perhaps if we proceed to Major Massard's own narrative the reader will be best able to judge this for her and himself.

Biographical: Marguerite Zelle, alias Mata-Hari, was born in 1876 in Java, of a native mother and a Dutch father. Stories of her having been put to nautch dancing in a temple



MATA-HARI.

may be discounted. At fourteen she was married to a Capt. McLeod, a British officer of the Indian Army stationed in the Straits Settlements. At seventeen, having borne him two children, she suddenly decamped without warning to Holland, and then began what was destined to be nearly twenty years of touring the European capitals, dancing and selling her charms. Indian dancing was her specialty—lascivious, libidinous stuff—and it was particularly popular in Berlin, which became her centre of gravity. Mata-Hari developed into a typical demi-mondaine of the "higher" class.

Tall, graceful, and of an Oriental turn of appearance which attracted large numbers of the more blasé type of men, Mata-Hari followed various European armies around on manoeuvres. (Major Massard relates that she attended the manoeuvres in Silesia before the war under the protection of the German Crown Prince, quite a likely occurrence if we recall that worthy's penchant for dancing girls.)

Just before the war, Mata-Hari, now in the first flight of cosmopolitan courtesans, took a villa at Neuilly, a Paris suburb, and here she staged risqué soirees for the benefit of "magistrates, artists, soldiers and others of the chic world." Such corners of high license, not wholly restricted to Paris, are well known to exist to this day, patronized by neurotic women and show girls and men of money and lapsed appetite—and Mata-Hari, according to Major Massard, apparently left little or nothing to her clients' imagination, for he says gallantly, if not exactly gallantly, "I'm going to show her as nude as she was when she danced before our soldiers and politicians." The Major, who writes most wrathfully throughout, explains that he knows his subject in all its intricacies.

"As Commandant of the General Staff of the Armies of Paris I assisted—alone—at the two audiences of the court martial which judged her in the most rigorous secrecy. I did not lose sight of her in prison at St. Lazare, and it was I who led her to the shooting post. I can therefore give the most precise details, but I cannot say all, for the moment has not come for me to divulge the

names of certain excellent Frenchmen mixed up in the case." (In passing, the date of the Mata-Hari case has fixed these "excellent Frenchmen" definitely and their names are an open secret in Paris to-day.) Major Massard continues:

"The boches have sought to make of the admirable spy a German heroine to oppose Nurse Cavell. They pretend that she was innocent, that her condemnation was a judicial error—in brief, that she was a martyr to French officers. And they have not hesitated to send out propagandist films to America and elsewhere in support of this contention. It is sad to see a French author attempt to rehabilitate to-day a prostitute who killed so many of our compatriots."

The day war was declared Mata was in Berlin. She lunched with the chief of police in a fashionable restaurant, after which there were such crowds in the streets that her escort had to take her in his carriage and thus they drove through the streets of the capital. This fact was admitted by the spy.

"How were you with the Prefect of Police in Berlin on the day of the declaration of war?" asked the President of the court.

"I knew him at the music hall where I was playing. In Germany the police have the right to censor theatrical costumes and they found me too undraped. The Prefect came to examine me and that was how we made each other's acquaintance."

"Good. You then entered the service of the German Chief of Intelligence, who entrusted you with a mission in Paris, handed you \$20,000 marks, and gave you the number C. A. 42."

"That is so," replied the dancer. "I was given a baptismal name in order that I might correspond with my friend, and \$20,000 marks. But these 20,000 marks were not the salary of a spy but were the price of my favors, because I was the mistress of the Chief of Intelligence."

"We know that. But he was very generous."

"Thirty thousand marks, that was my regular price. My lovers never gave me less."

"From Berlin you came to France, passing through Belgium and England. We were at the height of the war. What did you come to do in France?"

"I wanted to get my furniture from the villa at Neuilly."

"Very good. But then you went

to the front, where you stayed seven months on the pretext that you were attached to a Red Cross unit at Vittel."

"That's so. I desired, in staying at Vittel, to devote myself to a poor Russian captain, Capt. Marow, who had gone blind. I wanted to make amends for my life of debauchery in consecrating myself to a man I had loved. He was even the only man I ever did love."

"Yes, but you went about especially with our aviators. You were very intimate with certain among them and these brave lads had no secret for you on the pillow. It was thus that you got to know the places where we intended dropping agents on the other side of the lines. You gave precise details of these spots to the Germans and thus caused a large number of soldiers to be shot."

"It is true that from the front I corresponded with my friend, who was no longer in Berlin but in Amsterdam. It is not my fault that he was Chief of Intelligence."

"This reply," observes Major Massard, "the feebleness of which is self-evident, indicates the line of defense the accused had taken up."

"To-morrow's instalment describes Mata-Hari in the dock. Officers, she tells her judges, won her favors. 'I have had numerous lovers,' she confessed, 'but they were always soldiers.'"

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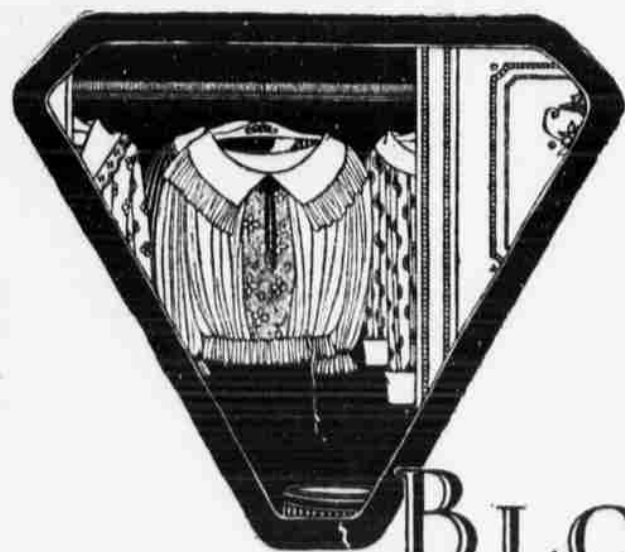
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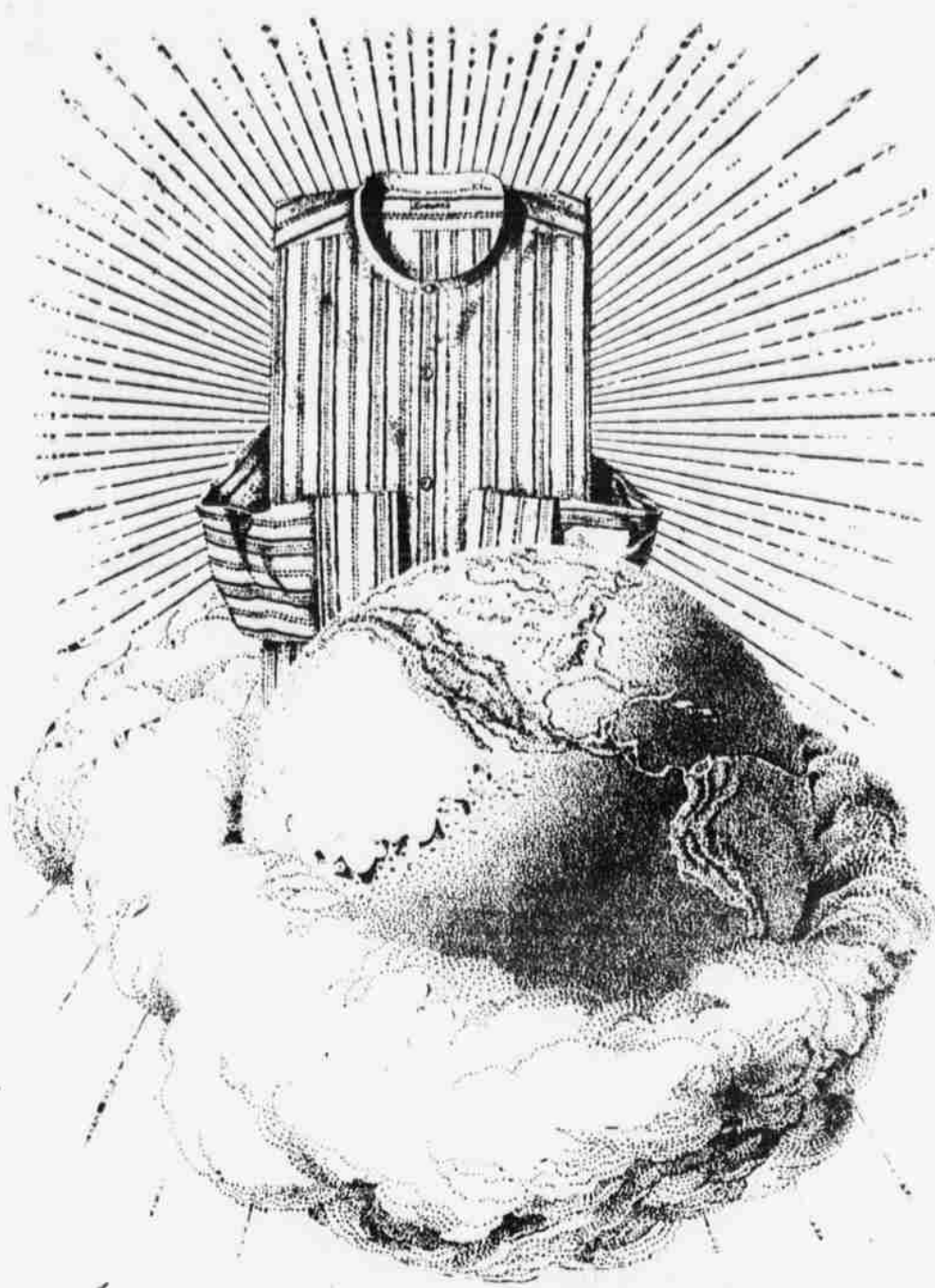
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